

"Catharineberg,"
Governor Hans Henrik Berg House
(now Denmark Hill)
Estate No. 8, Store Nordside Quarter
Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-12

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

"CATHARINEBERG,"
GOVERNOR HANS HENRIK BERG HOUSE (now Denmark Hill)

HABS No. VI-12

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VI
3. CHAM
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Address: Estate No. 8, Store Nordside Quarter, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Present Owner: The West India Company.

Present Occupant: Consul-General Arne M. Aabye.

Present Use: Residence for the Danish Consul-General.

Statement of Significance: This is a large, country house, built on a hill overlooking Charlotte Amalie in the early nineteenth century. Built as the home of Governor Berg, it has always been considered one of the finest houses in the Virgin Islands.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Information from the St. Thomas Land Records prepared by Miss Enid M. Baa, Chief, Bureau of Libraries and Museums, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

The original owner, Hans Henrik Berg, acquired the plantation 2 Feb. 1826. Berg died 16 April 1862. Catharineberg sold by the executors of his estate to William C. Carpenter 24 March 1864. Measurements of the property and a plan of the area are recorded with the bill of sale. [St. Thomas Land Records, Protocol 00, folio 122-23, No. 2].

In 1864 the government of the Danish West Indies proposed buying Berg's house. The old government house was badly in need of replacement, and Berg's house was offered to the Government for \$12,000. The Colonial Council discussed the Government's proposal on 18 April 1864 and 23 April 1864 but rejected it in favor of demolishing the old Government House and building a new one on the old site. [Proceedings of the Colonial Council of St. Thomas and St. John, on microfilm in the St. Thomas Public Library.]

Catharineberg was sold at Auction 27 December 1875 to Jose Bregaro and Enrique Bregaro for \$9,000 [U. S. National Archives, Virgin Islands Records, Records

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Group 55, St. Thomas Office of the Building Inspector and Surveyor, Surveyor's work papers 1820-1911 St. Thomas Estates.]

Catharineberg later became the property of Jean Joseph Clitus Delinois who bequeathed it to Louis Delinois 23 March 1898 [St. Thomas Land Records, protocol CCC, folio 51, No. 46.]

By deed of gift the property passed from Louis Auguste Jean Joseph P. Delinois and Christine Anna Marie Delinois to the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Thomas on 11 September 1913. [St. Thomas Land Records, Protocol YYY, folio 118, No. 404.]

The Estate, however, was returned to Widow Anna Marie Delinois 13 November 1916, the circumstances explained in the deed:

"By Deed of Gift dated Sept. 11, 1913 and recorded on the 8th of Dec. 1913, the late Consul-General Louis A.J.J.P. Delinois and his wife Mrs. Anna Marie Delinois, nee Clendinen, gave to the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Thomas their property "Cathrineberg" No. 8 Store Nordside Quarter, St. Thomas, for the purpose of making said property a hospital as it is said in the deed, 'for persons of all faiths in conformity with rules to be made by said congregation and these to be sanctioned by the Danish government.'

"It is further remarked in the deed that the two bonds for a total of Frs. 27,000 which were recorded on the property did not in any manner concern the congregation, but would be paid by Mr. Delinois as soon as convenient.

"The above mentioned deed was however not given over to the congregation till after the death of Mr. Delinois which took place on the 21 of March 1916.

"At a special meeting of the Board of Church-Wardens and the Parish Priest held on the 13th of July 1916 the matter was discussed, but although all expressed their high appreciation of the excellent intention

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of the donors yet under their present financial conditions they were obliged to adopt unanimously the following Resolution:

"That in view of the heavy cost to establish a hospital, to equip it, maintain it, and install the necessary staff of doctors, nurses, servants, etc., with salaries, the Roman Catholic Congregation regrets that it is not in a position to accept the gift and carry out the conditions stipulated by the donors.

'In accordance with this resolution we the undersigned Fr. James Morris Parish Priest of the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Thomas, and J. E. Kuntz, Carl A. Thraen, Edw. A. Moron, and G. F. French, Church-Wardens of said Congregation do hereby give back and hand over to Widow Mrs. Anna Marie Delinois the property Catharineberg No. 8, Store Nordside Kvarter, St. Thomas with grounds, buildings and everything legally belonging to same and it shall hereafter follow and belong to her with the same rights and obligations with which it was transferred to the Congregation.'

[St. Thomas Land Records, Protocol KKK, folio 174, No. 205.]

The property passed from Widow Anna Marie Delinois (L. H. Van Aller, attorney for Mrs. Delinois) to the West India Company, the present owners, by deed of 24 December 1917 recorded 7 January 1918. [St. Thomas Land Records, Protocol LLL, folio 148, No. 47.]

Estate Catharineberg contained originally 170 acres. The estate adjoined the platted limits of Charlotte Amalie, and as the town grew the estate was subdivided for residential purposes. This was done to a large extent by Berg himself from the 1840's on, dividing the outer areas of his holdings into at least eight separate parcels. [U. S. National Archives, Virgin Islands Records, Records Group 55, St. Thomas Office of the Building Inspector and Surveyor, Surveyor's Work Papers 1820-1911 St. Thomas Estates.]

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2. Date of erection: c. 1830.

The house is dated 1830 by T. Hvass and about 1830 by K. Larsen, Dansk Vestindien, 1666-1917, probably following Hvass, but no authority is cited for these dates. The earliest clearly documented mention of the house comes from Hans Birch Dahlerup's visit in 1841 recorded in his memoirs. Dahlerup described it as a "splendid villa on a site of unequalled beauty on a hill close outside the city." Unfortunately, the house is just outside the area recorded on the Hingelberg Map of Charlotte Amalie of 1836-37.

Tax Records suggest that the house was standing in 1831 and occupied by Berg and his family. This being an estate rather than town property Berg did not pay a building tax, but instead a tax on cultivated acreage. Both city and country dwellers, however, paid a head tax, and the Matricula (roll or register) for 1831 lists under the heading "owner and family," two men, one woman, one son. The Matricula also enumerates, under the heading of "overseer and family," two men and one woman, and under the heading of "colored," three house servants, six outdoor servants and four tax-free servants. Only four of the 170 acres were cultivated and they are listed as a garden. This sounds like the kind of domestic establishment an official in Berg's position would have. The Matricula for 1828 shows no one living at Catharineberg. It seems likely, therefore, that the house was built for Berg between the time he bought the estate in 1826, and 1831.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure

Hans Henrik Berg (1788/9-1862) was a prominent public official and land owner in the Danish West Indies for 50 years. He left Denmark in 1812 to go to the West Indies. Settling in St. Thomas, he advanced quickly in public office as town clerk (Byskriver), Chief Constable and Government Councillor (Politimester og Regeringsraad) and titular councillor of State (Etatsraad). Berg was governor in 1862. Catharineberg was used only as a residence by Berg, the estate was not farmed. He owned two plantations on St. John, however, which were under cultivation, Annaberg and Lemsterbay, and in 1831 owned a total of 392 slaves on these.

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Catharineberg, if nothing else, was a tax dodge for Berg. Plantations were taxed on cultivated acreage while holdings within the town limits of Charlotte Amalie were taxed on the area of the buildings. In 1831 since there were only four acres under cultivation at Catharineberg the ground tax was only one rigsdaler 32 skilling, while the house would have been taxed about 40 rigsdaler if it had been within the town limits instead of just beyond them.

C. Sources of Information

Primary Sources:

Information from St. Thomas Land Records prepared by Miss Enid M. Baa, Chief, Bureau of Libraries and Museums, St. Thomas.

U. S. National Archives, Virgin Islands Records, Records Group 55:

1. St. Thomas Office of the Building Inspector and Surveyor, Surveyor's work papers, 1820-1911, St. Thomas Estates.
2. St. Thomas and St. John Tax Commission, Matriculae (rolls or registers) 1828, 1831.

An early view of the house appears in a colored print of St. Thomas by Ralph Stennet at the St. Thomas Public Library.

The view is dedicated to "Governor" Peter von Scholten, so it presumably dates from his governorship 1827-48. Stennet is known to have been in St. Thomas in 1833 when he advertised to paint portraits in the Sanct Thomae Tidende 7 August 1833 (microfilm copy at the St. Thomas Public Library).

Published Sources:

Brøndsted, Johannes, editor, Vore Gamle Tropekolonier, Vol. II: Dansk Vestindien (Copenhagen: Westermann, 1953), pp. 384, 421; modern watercolor view by Andersen p. 371.

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Dahlerup, Hans Birch, Mit Livs Begivenheder, 2 vols., Vol. I: 1790-1814, Vol. II: 1815-1848 (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909), vol. II, p. 272.

Hvass, Tyge, Dansk Vestindien, Vol. VI of Afldre Nordisk Architektur, Mogens Clemmensen, editor (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1925), p. 11, p. 22, fig. 35.

Larsen, Kay, Dansk Vestindien, 1666-1917 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1928), pp. 44-45.

Larsen, Kay, Guvernører, Residenter, Kommandanter og Chefer, Samt Enkelte Andre Fremtraedende personer i de Tidligere Danske Tropekolonier (Copenhagen: Arthur Jensens Forlag, 1940), pp. 397, 231.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
August 1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural merit: A fine example of West Indies Danish Colonial house.
2. Condition of fabric: In good condition. Maintained as the residence of the Danish Consul and local head of the Danish West Indian Company, Ltd.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories; over-all dimensions, layout, shape: Two stories; masonry bearing walls; approximately 70' x 50'; "U" shaped layout.
2. Foundations: Brick and stone rubble masonry with lime plaster patched with cement. All painted. Masonry base projecting about 2" beyond wall base and extending about 1'-6" above grade, painted a russet red.
3. Wall construction: Same as above with openings and corners in brick. String course at window sill and porch door level separates main and ground floors. (Main floor interior partitions are wooden frame.) Plastered walls are painted white, except in court formed by wings,

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where walls are the same color as masonry base. All masonry bands, cornices, etc., are painted white throughout.

4. Openings: There is a passageway through ground-floor level on main or transverse axis. This leads from service area (inside the "U"), under the main rooms and porch to terrace on east side. Partly vaulted in brick (under the porch and steps) with the flat soffit elsewhere.
5. Openings; doors, doorways, windows, and shutters: Main entrance is now on the north side of the north wing on the second floor (main floor). Formerly it was on the second floor (main floor) of the east wing on the east side. This entrance is now used as the entrance from the garden terrace. Service entrance on the first floor of west side of east wing from the court. A passage through the center of the east wing connects the former main entrance and the service entrance as mentioned above.

Main floor: Main doorway and all windows on the east and south sides extend to floor line with exterior shutters. All shutters are double plank, vertical outside, horizontal inside; painted white inside (usually exposed) and green outside. Several shutters have portholes of metal frame with glass for viewing the weather during storms.

The windows (on the east and the south sides) are double-hung, 12 lights each leaf, wooden sash in wooden frame, with about 50% of original glass. The north three windows on east side have solid bottom half of double-hung window. Southern two of these have air conditioning units flush with exterior.

The court side of the east wing has three double doors with three panels to each leaf. Bottom panel is solid with adjustable louvers in upper two panels. The openings have wooden rails set in frame between doors and shutters. Windows towards the court are on the west sides of the north and south wings and have the same head height as other windows but with a sill height of 36". In place of doors are glazed sash that have two-panel double adjustable louvered sash opening in.

Ground floor: Doors are generally double doors of

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double plank construction horizontal inside and vertical outside. Doors under former main entrance have two-panel frame in place of horizontal boarding on the inside. All windows are square with outside shutters as described above and jalousie interior shutters with adjustable louvers. All openings in masonry are splayed inward.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Behind parapet is metal roofing (mostly corrugated) sloped inward to service court where cast iron downspout drains to cisterns.
- b. Cornice: Large elaborately molded cornice with parapet above which has plain projecting panels corresponding to openings bays. The four outside corners hold acroteria. Two smaller acroteria at inside corners formed by portico and house.

No eaves, dormers or chimneys. On southwest corner is a rotating vent stack.

.. C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: The building has three "wings" forming a "U". The east wing, the bottom of the "U", is seven bays by two bays wide with an addition to the north of one bay for the full width of the wing.

The south and north wings are both two bays wide by three bays long. The south wing is about 6' longer than the north wing.

Main floor: Living room, center parlor, large bedroom and bath (in eighth bay) across east side. Hall runs entire length of house on west side of above rooms and separates two west wings: bedroom now used as extra room south and bedroom with alcove and bath north. All rooms are large with high ceilings.

Ground floor: Dining room northeast (used to be a stable); northwest, laundry, maid's room, bath; southwest, kitchen; south, unused guest room and bath. Storage elsewhere on ground floor. Thick masonry interior partitions with round or segmental arched openings.

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2. Stairways: Onne wooden frame stairway on each end of hall.
3. Flooring: Brick, large slate tiles or square marble on ground floor. 8" pine or oak boards on main floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Ground floor painted, lime plaster over masonry. Exposed structural joists on ceiling.

Main floor: Wall board; wooden plank and wooden paneled ceilings.
5. Doors: All wooden; single leaf, eight panel or French glazed upper 10 lights with solid panel below.
6. Trim: Baseboards, cornice boards, frame around ceiling are all molded. All openings have molded wooden trim with square ornamental corners.
7. Hardware: Wrought iron pintles, hinges, storm bars, brackets, hooks and eyes and holdbacks for the exterior shutters. Inside, assorted painted, ceramic, and brass hardware.
8. Lighting: Converted from gas to electric. Ornate chandelier in parlor.
9. Heating: No facilities.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Portico faces east. Just south of the crown of Denmark Hill the site slopes off steeply on three sides and has a view of Charlotte Amalie.
2. Enclosures: Low masonry curbs around planting areas about the house. Retaining walls divide the hill into terraces. They are constructed of brick and rubble masonry, plastered and painted pink.
3. Outbuildings: Two small recent one-car garages flanking transverse axis west of house. Servants' quarters and cook house to northwest, with details similar to but simpler than those of the house; three rooms. Small wooden frame open-air pavilion east of house over part of terrace; it has Tuscan columns as does the por-

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tico of the main house. To the east of the house under the terrace built into the hill is a large single room with masonry walls, round brick vault, large, heavy double plank French doors, and a slit window on each side of the door. Use unknown, probably for storage or animals.

Prepared by Frederik C. Gjessing, Architect
and

Philip E. Gardner, Architect
National Park Service
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